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U.S. Transportation Secretary Ray LaHood and the National Safety Council Announce FocusDriven

*First of its kind advocacy group will raise awareness
and support victims of distracted driving*

WASHINGTON, DC – U.S. Transportation Secretary Ray LaHood and National Safety Council President Janet Froetscher today announced the creation of FocusDriven, the first national nonprofit organization devoted specifically to raising awareness about the dangers of distracted driving. The group will be led by Jennifer Smith, who has been an outspoken advocate against distracted driving since her mother was killed by someone talking on his cell phone while driving in 2008.

FocusDriven is a direct outgrowth of the September 2009 national Distracted Driving Summit in Washington, DC called by Secretary LaHood. Since the two-day meeting that brought together affected families, law enforcement, researchers, public officials and others, family members of distracted driving victims have worked to establish an advocacy organization with support from the Department of Transportation and the National Safety Council (NSC), a nonprofit organization that uses leadership, research, education and advocacy to prevent injuries and save lives. FocusDriven's new website, www.focusdriven.org, hosts information on distracted driving, help for victims and family members, and ways to get involved.

"I first met several of the founding members of FocusDriven at our Distracted Driving Summit, and I'm deeply impressed by their commitment to turn these tragic events into positive actions that will help save lives," said Secretary LaHood. "Their stories are not just heartbreaking; they're also a clear and compelling call to action."

"It is my hope that FocusDriven will serve as a valuable resource for those who have lost loved ones as a result of the senseless and preventable destructive practice of distracted driving," said Jennifer Smith, President of FocusDriven. "Secretary LaHood and the Department of Transportation's attention to this topic have helped make it top safety issue. Their efforts have provided hope that we can quickly eliminate this threat and prevent other families from going through what we have experienced."

Exactly one year ago today, the National Safety Council became the first organization to call for a nationwide ban on cell phone use while driving. NSC President and CEO Janet Froetscher spoke at the Department of Transportation's national Distracted Driving Summit last fall and has committed NSC's resources to helping establish FocusDriven.

"FocusDriven is an important organization that puts faces and names to the tragedies caused by cell phone use while driving," said National Safety Council President Janet Froetscher. "The members of

FocusDriven have powerful stories to tell about their loved ones. We hope their stories will help people realize the dangers of using cell phones while driving."

FocusDriven is modeled after Mothers Against Drunk Driving (MADD), which has successfully changed society's attitudes towards drinking and driving with the use of advocates who have experienced the terrible consequences firsthand. FocusDriven also hopes to provide support for victims of distracted driving, which has become a growing epidemic in our society, but also to expand its mission to include education and the evaluation of new technologies.

Shelley Forney. Fort Collins, Colorado. Her daughter Erica was killed when a woman driving an SUV failed to see her riding her bike home from school.

Rob Reynolds. Omaha, Nebraska. Rob lost his 16-year-old daughter Cady when a distracted teen driver ran a red light and sideswiped her car.

Judy Teater. Spring Lake, Michigan. Judy was taking her son Joe home from an after-school activity when a young woman on a cell phone ran a red light and hit the passenger side of her car, killing Joe. Since then, she and her husband David Teater have become outspoken advocates against distracted driving.

Elissa Schee. Citra, Florida. Elissa lost her daughter, Margay, when a semi truck slammed into the back of her stopped school bus.

Putting an end to the dangerous practice of distracted driving is a top priority for Secretary LaHood and the Department of Transportation. The department recently launched a federal website, www.distraction.gov, with comprehensive information on distracted driving, as well as a national PSA featuring Secretary LaHood to raise awareness about this dangerous driving behavior.

Secretary LaHood said, "Just as groups like MADD changed attitudes about drunk driving, I believe FocusDriven can help raise awareness and change the way people think about distracted driving. Together, I hope we can put an end to this dangerous practice."

For more information about preventing distracted driving, please visit www.distraction.gov, www.nsc.org, and www.focusdriven.org.

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